

**OPENING STATEMENT OF
TIM S. McCLAIN
DESIGNEE FOR NOMINATION AS GENERAL COUNSEL
DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**UNITED STATES SENATE
COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS
HEARING ON PROPOSED NOMINATION
APRIL 4, 2001**

Mr. Chairman, Senator Rockefeller and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the invitation to appear before you today. I am humbled and honored by this nomination and the opportunity to testify at this hearing.

I believe that I possess a degree of experience that can, and will, be valuable to veterans if I am blessed with confirmation. Following graduation from high school, I entered the Naval Academy as a plebe with the Class of 1970. A little over twenty-four years later, I retired from active duty and became one of the millions of veterans who have proudly served this country. During my time on active duty I saw action in Vietnam as a Surface Warfare Officer, attended law school and joined the Navy JAG Corps, defended military members at courts-martial, adjudicated claims, advised senior officers on a myriad of legal issues, taught at the Naval Justice School (the Navy's Law School), and for four years presided as a Military Judge at courts-martial.

Upon retirement from active duty I entered the private practice of law, specializing in defending medical professionals in malpractice cases. Several years ago I was employed as a management consultant, directing and supervising consulting projects in major U.S. companies at offices here and abroad.

Most recently I have been a partner in a small private law firm specializing in health care, administrative and military law.

I believe this breadth of experience allows me to bring certain skills to the General Counsel's Office. However, I realize that I have much to learn about the Department, its responsibilities and the issues that concern the veterans we serve. I can assure you that I am fully committed to addressing those issues promptly and responsibly.

As General Counsel my focus will be to act as counselor and advisor-at-law to Secretary Principi, and his new team, as he implements his vision for the future of the Department. I believe I already have a good working relationship with the Secretary. From our discussions I know that many challenges lay ahead in the areas of veterans health care and adjudication of claims for veterans benefits. If I am confirmed, I intend to become fully conversant on these pressing issues and I will take a proactive/pro-veteran role in advising the Secretary, Deputy Secretary and Under Secretaries on the current law as it applies to these challenges.

If confirmed, I look forward to working closely with the members and staff of this Committee in addressing the various issues so important to veterans. I also look forward to working with the Veterans Service Organizations. Their comments and concerns have spurred useful debate on many of the most difficult issues. I am certain that through a spirit of cooperation, we can discuss the issues and the proposed solutions in a manner that will ultimately benefit all veterans.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my opening statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions from the Committee.